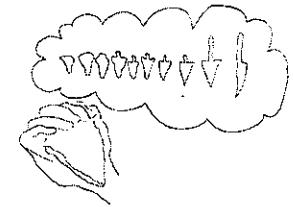


Metaphysics: Ontology (or Existence)

A Knife Idea

Peter Worley



Starting age: 10 years

A caveman called Ug has recently found a mammoth that has died naturally and so doesn't have the characteristic puncture wounds that sabre-toothed tigers leave. Winter is drawing near. He needs the skins and the meat but is unable to cut the mammoth open because knives haven't been invented yet.

Later that day whilst Ug is collecting stones to make a fire – fire-making *has* been invented! – he cuts himself on a sharp rock (a rock we now call 'flint'). This gives him an idea: he takes the sharp-edged rock and uses it to cut open the mammoth. This enables him to get to the meat and, with the help of his new tool, to remove the skin.

The following day he uses another harder type of rock to chisel the flint into a shape that has one very sharp side making his new tool even more efficient. With his new tool he is able to make himself all sorts of other things – as yet uninvented – such as bowls, a stool and a table. Later he learns how to make more of his cutting tools, which he uses either to replace them when they break or to exchange with other cavemen for goods. Soon all of his tribe has the new tool and they give it the name 'knife.'

Start Question When did the object become a knife?

Think about the Start Question before looking at the suggestions below.

Was it ...

1. When the rock he would make it from was lying on the ground?
2. When he cut himself on the rock?
3. When he had the idea?
4. When he chiselled it into shape?
5. When he first used it?
6. When it was first given the name 'knife'?
7. Or at some other time? If so, when and why?

Questions to take you further

- ♦ When does something become what it is?
- ♦ What exactly is a knife? Can you define a knife?
- ♦ Is Ug's tool a knife or not?
- ♦ Does a knife have to be a certain shape?
- ♦ If 'the knife', 'the bowl', 'the stool' and 'the table' don't yet have names, what are they?
- ♦ **What is existence?**
- ♦ What does 'exist' mean?

Your Questions

- ♦
- ♦
- ♦

Works well with

- ✓ The Philosophical Adventures of Pencil Person pages 41–46
- ✓ Phil and Soph and the Ice Cream
- ✓ Just Testing!
- ✓ A Heap of Exercises?
- ✓ Of Fences
- ✓ *The If Machine: The Chair*¹

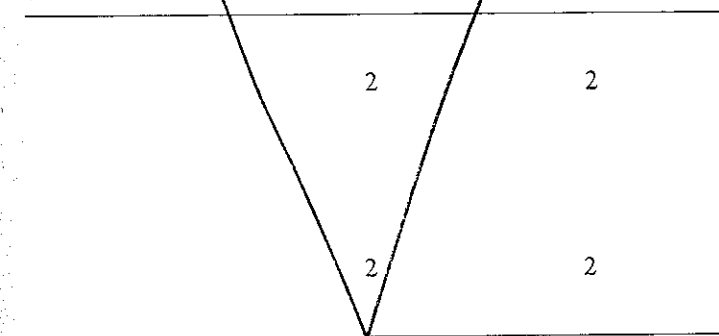
Philosophy: Ontology, existence, being, sense and reference, Aristotle, Wittgenstein, Frege.

¹ See *The If Machine: Philosophical Enquiry in the Classroom* by Peter Worley (Continuum, 2011).

The 2 Square

Peter Worley

Starting age: 7 years



Start Question Take a look at the 2s above. How many numbers do you see?

Questions to take you further

- ♦ How many different answers can you think of?
- ♦ If someone said that there are no numbers there, can you say why?
- ♦ **What is a number?**
- ♦ Are numbers real or made up?
- ♦ Are numbers invented or discovered?
- ♦ Where can numbers be found?
- ♦ Are the symbols that you see in 'the 2 square' numbers?
- ♦ If not, what are numbers then?
- ♦ Draw a number 2 on a blank piece of paper. Now stare at it for a few minutes. Does it still look like a 2? Turn it around and look at it from different sides. What exercise make you think?

Your Questions

- ♦
- ♦
- ♦